



## Warm Home Hacks

**Advice and tips on how to save on heating costs while still keeping warm at home during the winter months.**

It's important to make sure that you and your household are warm enough at home to support your health and comfort, as well as avoiding risk of damp issues in your property. Here are strategies and tips to help reduce the amount of heating energy used during the cold months, and how to keep cosy without needing to turn up the heating.

### Cost-saving boiler

#### Adjust boiler temperature

Boilers have a hot water temperature dial for hot water going to taps, and second temperature dial for hot water going to heating system if you have central heating. Adjust both dials so they are set at halfway around the dial, or at 50 percent, as this is enough boiler heat. This adjustment doesn't reduce the temperature of your hot water from the tap or your radiator warmth. But instead of your boiler keeping some hot water ready for instant use, it will take a bit longer to heat up water but will save money. Lowering the temperature on both boiler dials can reduce gas bill by 10-20 percent.

#### Annual boiler service

A cleaned and serviced boiler provides a more efficient heating system and runs more cost-effectively. Some energy companies have monthly plans from £3.50 per month that include annual boiler service. Or book a boiler engineer for around £85. Check before you book that they specialise in your boiler brand and model.





## Myth-busting central heating

**Myth:** It's cost effective to leave heating running constantly. Boiler consumes energy all day, whether it is needed or not.

**Myth:** Short bursts of high heat are efficient, such as setting heating to come on twice a day at high temperature. Uses a lot of boiler energy to

*create so much heat, but then rooms quickly cool down.*

### Cost-efficient solution

- Set room thermostat to a consistent temperature between 18-20 degrees. Boiler activates only when room temperature drops below the setting.
- Only heat rooms you use most.



## Cost-effective room thermostat

Set room thermostat at 18-20 degrees to maintain warmth in rooms most used. Usually living room, bedrooms, and whichever room is used if working or studying from home.

## Cost-saving radiators

### Adjust radiator dial settings

Adjust according to how you use each room. Make sure radiators are turned off in unused rooms and consider turning off in the hallway. You could turn on the radiator or heater in bedrooms to warm up the rooms before going to bed. Family rooms, and bedrooms for vulnerable children and adults should be kept warm. Boiler experts say don't turn radiator dial down to below halfway as it won't produce any effective heat and you will just waste boiler energy.



## Create space around radiators

Large pieces of furniture such as sofas and beds, overhanging curtains, and wet laundry over radiators, all block heat from circulating into the room. Even an over-radiator rack will prevent warm air from circulating. Instead, stand a clothes airing rack on the floor in front of radiator so heat can flow effectively to warm the room and dry laundry quickly. Move furniture at least 6-12 inches (15-30cm) away from radiators. This allows heat to flow around the room more effectively so room is warmer and can save up to 10 percent on heating bills. If space is tight in a small room, a few inches between furniture and radiator still helps.

## Banish draughts

Even small gaps on a window frame or external door can create nasty cold draughts and reduce room temperature. Here are some easy ways to block those draughts. It is important that you never seal up or block ventilation including extractor fans, air bricks, wall vents, and 'trickle' vents found at the top of modern windows. These are very important for allowing moisture out of your home otherwise mould will develop.

## Thermal-lined curtains

These help insulate rooms against heat loss through glass and stop cold draughts from windows. Thermal curtains can reduce room heat loss by up to 15 percent. Prices online from £20.00 for thermal lined curtains, or from £12.00 for thermal linings only. Or hang thick curtain fabric such as velvet. Consider a front door curtain if you have a draught or glass in your front door.



## Draught excluders

Here are some low-cost hacks for blocking cold draughts around your home. Each of these handy items costs from £5.00 each, available from Amazon or local DIY stores. YouTube has lots of helpful videos to show how to install. No DIY skill needed.

- **Draughts around window frames or external doors:** Attach strips of self-adhesive draught tape made of foam or rubber, sold in rolls. Available in variety of width and thickness, to suit different gaps. Or pack out with bubble wrap strips, the air filled bubbles make great insulation, and works well for gaps too narrow for draught tape.

- **Draughty letterbox:** Install a letterbox brush. Easy to install, comes with instruction.



- **Draughty gap under door:** Attach self-adhesive under-door strip or place a stuffed fabric draught excluder against the gap. A rolled-up towel is a good no-cost temporary alternative.

## Cost-saving laundry drying

Instead of turning on your heating primarily to tackle wet laundry, here are some much cheaper options to consider that use less power to run. Free up your radiator heat to warm your rooms and instead use one of these options to dry clothes.

### Air dry for free

- **Hang up in bathroom.** Put on hangers over bathroom shower rail or on drying rack over bath. Extractor fan will dry clothes and remove moist air.

### Cost-efficient tumble dryer

Tumble dryers are the most expensive household item to use and we are advised to avoid. But using these hacks you can cut running cost by up to 50 percent. Tumble dryer will dry laundry indoors much quicker than other methods, and avoids

damp issues from drying clothes indoors.

- **Extra spins.** Reduces drying time by up to a third. After washing programme finished, set to spin an extra once or twice to spin out more water.

- **Tumble dryer balls.** Reduces time in tumble dryer by 10-25 percent depending on load. Add green tennis balls or dryer balls made of wool to help separate wet laundry in the machine so warm air circulates better to speed up drying.

- **Reduce timer setting.** Reduce running time by 20-25 percent by adjusting timer manually. Or use tumble dry for just 30 minutes. Laundry will only be slightly damp and you can finish drying for free on clothes airer or on hangers.

- **Cost-efficient load.** Avoid running tumble dryer for one item. Divide a full load into several smaller loads, this allows air to circulate so less total drying time than one full load that never seems to dry.

*Price to run: using most of these time-saving hacks, average 70p per hour depending on load.*

## Dehumidifier

As well as being effective for drying laundry, dehumidifiers remove excess moisture from home. Get rid of damp chilly feeling caused by moisture in the air from wet laundry, damp building, or high humidity weather conditions.

- **Choose capacity** suitable for size of home and for the typical volume of laundry drying load. Prices start from £45 for a mini dehumidifier suitable for small kitchen or bathroom, easy to carry around.

- **Drying laundry.** Cheaper to run per hour than tumble dryer, but takes a lot longer to dry clothes.

- **Compressor dehumidifiers** are low energy usage, as they take moisture from air without heat output.

- **Desiccant dehumidifiers** cost more to run but give out heat which helps save on room heating.

*Price to run: around 3p per hour for small low-energy compressor dehumidifier, around 7p per hour for small desiccant dehumidifier. Double this running cost for a large dehumidifier.*



## Warm home support

Remote support and home visits for vulnerable and low income households. Offer free energy saving advice, assess for draughts, provide draught excluders. Self-refer or ask someone to apply on your behalf using online form.

- **Green Doctors.** Cover London. Can also deliver warm pack of blanket, gloves, hat, and thermal mug. Freephone 0300 365 3005

[london.greendoctors.org.uk](http://london.greendoctors.org.uk)

- **Better Housing Better Health.** Cover London and Bedfordshire. Freephone 0800 107 0044

[bhbh.org.uk](http://bhbh.org.uk)

- **Crew Energy.** Covers London area. Freephone 0800 086 2706 [crewenergy.london/home-energy-advice.html](http://crewenergy.london/home-energy-advice.html)

## Heat the person not the home

Here are tips for keeping yourself keeping warm, instead of turning up heating or leaving it on longer.

### Blankets

Great way to keep cosy and warm at home. Use for wrapping up while watching TV, covering your legs and feet while sitting at a computer, and as extra layer on the bed on cold nights. Here are some alternatives to a traditional wool or fleece blanket.



- **Electric blanket.** As well as wrapping yourself, use to pre-heat the bed before a cosy night's sleep. Also sold as heated throws. Prices from £35 for a single bed size, available in double size too, from retailers such as Argos or Dunelm.

*Price to run: under 3p per hour.*

- **Self-heating blanket.** Has internal layer of heat-reflecting foil so you don't lose body heat, with fleecy layer on both sides. Huge size large enough for a family to snuggle under on the sofa. Blanket by Silentnight, price around £40 from online retailers such as Amazon.

- **Wearable blanket.** Hooded fleecy blanket with sleeves so no need to take it off when you get up from sofa or chair. Options include full length. Prices start from £18 for adult size from online retailers such as Dunelm or Amazon.



### Mini plug heaters

Low energy way to top up heat around where you are sitting, need to plug in close by as heat output doesn't go far. Great for keeping warm when sitting at computer or watching TV. Can set on a timer, and control the temperature. Easy to take around your home and plug in wherever needed. Budget ceramic heater Russell and Hobb mini heaters priced from £20, available from retailers such as Currys and Amazon.

*Price to run: around 8p per hour.*

### Useful links

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/energy](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/energy)

[helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/energy-saving-advice](http://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/energy-saving-advice)

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/energy-at-home>

Article by Cost of Living, People Participation Team



Visit <https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service-users-and-carers/cost-living> for more tips and advice on how to save on your household bills.